

# EAT WELL, LIVE WELL WITH HIV

## Addressing food insecurity for people living with HIV

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### Introduction

Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF) presents workshops on Health, Nutrition and Cooking skills.

### Background

Food security is determined by a number of factors such as income, physical mobility, access to transport, knowledge and skills, cooking facilities, homelessness and mental health. It is long term and ongoing, rather than week to week. Healthy diets lead to good disease management.

HIV can cause people to have lower levels of naturally occurring vitamins from the foods they eat. People living with HIV (PLHIV) tend to be nutritionally deficient compared to those people living without HIV. The HIV infection causes marked immunological assaults and strategic damage to the digestive tract, including compromised barrier functions that can result in a decrease of nutrient absorption.

A recent study show that malnourished people are less likely to benefit from Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART). HIV and its treatment can lead to low levels of Vitamin A, B12, C, D, carotenoids, selenium, zinc and iron in the blood in various populations. An article published in *The Body* found that food insecurity is linked to poor medication adherence, resulting in higher viral loads and poorer health outcomes. (Rodriguez, Mathew, 19/07/2015: "Not Having Food to Eat Linked to Poor HIV Med Adherence").

### Method

BGF's Eat Well, Live Well with HIV program includes discussion of the nutrients most affected by HIV and ART, as well as foods that can help replete the missing nutrients. These highly interactive workshops are held over a 10 week period. Two sessions are held with a dietician plus there are 1-on-1 consultations throughout the course.

Workshops are peer led by two qualified facilitators, both whom are living with HIV. Research by Kate Lorig (School of Medicine, Stanford University) showed that people respond better when being taught by others who are living with the same chronic condition as themselves.

### Subject Matter

- Addressing mental health (Black Dog Institute)
- Reading food labels and a shopping trip
- Eating out on a budget and making healthy choices
- Substituting healthy ingredients
- Finding the motivation to cook for one
- Food budgeting
- Kitchen and food hygiene
- Hands on cooking skills
- Mindfulness



### Results

These workshops are designed to complement and enhance other programs that specifically address HIV, and not conflict with medical advice.

### Conclusions

Since September 2015, BGF has held two series of Eat Well, Live Well with HIV. A total of 22 people completed these programs. Post evaluation findings showed that:

- 94% of attendees reported they felt in more control of their condition and had more energy;
- 80% reported improved confidence in coping with HIV; and
- 74% felt they had built personal strategies to be able to eat better.

Participants also reported improvements in their quality of life, sleeping, exercising and social networks.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement**  
The Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre

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